Reflections on contributions of oral and life history in the construction of teacher's identity

Reflexões sobre as contribuições da história oral e de vida na construção da identidade do professor

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ABSTRACT
In this essay, we revisited our approach the use of the oral and life history research technique in the field of Education focussed on teacher education, previously discussed in the I National Seminar on Teacher Education and Teaching Practices, held on May 7 and 8, 2018 at the University of the West of Santa Catarina - Brazil. The aim is to provoke reflections on the contributions of the use of oral and life history in the process of a construction teaching identity. We emphasize that remember through the memories it contains contributions significantly to the establishment, elaboration, and reflection on the individual and collective identity. We had concluded, then, that studies that are based on oral and life histories make the exercise of recalling experiences related to the school environment, allow teachers the possibility to elaborate and re-elaborate their pedagogical praxis, and contributed to the construction of their identity.

Keywords: Memory, Oral history, Teaching identity.
RESUMO
Neste ensaio, revisitamos nossa abordagem do uso da técnica de pesquisa oral e de história de vida na área da Educação com foco na formação de professores, previamente discutida no I Seminário Nacional de Formação de Professores e Práticas de Ensino, realizado nos dias 7 e 8 de maio de 2018 na Universidade do Oeste de Santa Catarina - Brasil. O objetivo é provocar reflexões sobre as contribuições do uso da oralidade e da história de vida no processo de construção de uma identidade docente. Ressaltamos que lembrar por meio das memórias contém contribuições significativas para o estabelecimento, elaboração e reflexão sobre a identidade individual e coletiva. Concluímos, então, que estudos baseados em histórias orais e de vida fazem o exercício de relembrar experiências relacionadas ao ambiente escolar, permitem aos professores a possibilidade de elaborar e reelaborar sua práxis pedagógica, e contribuem para a construção de sua identidade.

Palavras-chave: Memória, História oral, Identidade docente.

1 INTRODUCTION
Do you remember that time?
How many of our best and long conversations are introduced with this simple question composed of few words. Such a proposition could still be reduced to two words: Remember when...? We have a particular opinion that, in a like manner, it would, also, bring countless memories. Our life history is recorded in us through memories; they compose us. Alternatively, in Arendt's thought, no matter how tender the age, there will always be something to remember, and to say. From birth to death, the whole life can be narrated, turning it into history, our history, 'The' history (ARENDT, 2007).

The educational research becomes biophilic, as it commits itself to the constant hunt to reframe the school space, aiming, in some way, to improve the collective experience in this place. Our proposition finds support in the thought of Berger (2009 p.78), the role of Educational Sciences is to investigate the knowledge that people have, and not produce knowledge about 'thingified’ people. In this sense, it is valid to revisit a little of the past of each teacher, child, youth, or adult, who makes up the human community in the process called education.

Ciavatta (2009) clarifies human emancipation takes place in the totality of social relations, right there, where life is produced. Therefore, a scientific practice that values the fundamental objective of transforming social reality, with a view to the desired improvements lives of the subjects that integrate it. That means

Memory is life, always carried by living groups. In this sense, it is in constant evolution open to the dialectic of remembrance and forgetfulness, unaware of its successive deformations, vulnerable to all uses and manipulations, susceptible to long
latencies and sudden revitalizations. History is always problematic and incomplete reconstruction of what no longer exists. Memory is an ever-present phenomenon; a link lived in the eternal present; History, a representation of the past. (NORA, 1993, p. 9)

We note that memory is a paradoxical resource, which evades Cartesian logic, as it is old at the same time that it is current. This characteristic may be among the attributes that trigger the aversion of some researchers guided by traditionalist logic. Nonetheless, we agree with the proposition of Larrosa (2002), whose alert is to the fact that:

*It is customary to think of education from the perspective of the relationship between science and technique or, sometimes, from the relationship between theory and practice. If the science/technique pair refers to a positive and rectifying perspective, the theory/practice pair refers mainly to a political and critical perspective. In fact, only in this last perspective does the word "reflection" and expressions like "critical reflection", "reflection on practise of non-practice", "emancipatory reflection" make sense. (LARROSA 2002, p. 20)*

The use of life and oral history as instruments for collecting and analyzing data within the educational field is recent. This method has been gaining prominence in the research scenario. Notwithstanding, data collection through life and oral history reports is often the subject of controversy in the academic environment, due to the possibility of, what Farias (1994, p.138) named, "selectivity". The concept of selectivity means an action in which the individual in the exercise of remembering selects his memories according to his interests. As for the research, Marconi and Lakatos (1999) point out the disadvantages and advantages of using oral memory as an instrument of data collection. Among the disadvantages they highlight:

- a) *Small degree of control over the data collection situation and the possibility that factors unknown to the investigator may interfere with the results.*

- b) *Verbal behaviour can be relatively unreliable due to the fact that individuals can falsify their answers* (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 1999, p. 88).

Regarding the advantages of this approach, the authors list the accumulation of information with the possibility of shared analysis and the ease in obtaining a significant sample.

Without ambition to deepen the discussion about the legitimacy of validation methods, let alone explore the authors' thoughts, who, by the way, enjoy our full fascination, with the due frugality of recent academics initiated in the field of research, we are encouraged to propose some questions:
What is the function of research if not, the search for what is unknown to us?

Wouldn't the interference of unknown factors in the results also be a finding?

When we search for such data mediated by memory, the research also turns to the understanding of how the researched subject constructs the narrative of memory, how he identifies her or himself and the Other; how s/he recognizes the elements and people who share social reality, and what are the characteristics of the context in which s/he is inserted. In other words, this perspective seeks to understand the subject's discourse from what the subject understands about himself and the context of which s/he speaks.

According to Jenkins (1996), identities are not innate; they are not born with us and need to be constructed. This construction involves interaction with Others, as social interaction allows us to live in society. As long as we understand that identity is built in a strict relationship with the Other. We believe it is possible to justify the intersection between teaching identity and life history, after all, as stated by Catani and Bueno (2000, p.168) what means "addressing identity necessarily implies talking about the self, as well as the ways in which the subject remembers his experiences and comes into contact with himself ".

Because of the argument already made, we intend, based on the studies of Bueno (2006), Le Goff (1990), Pollak (1992), Polon (2009), Silva, Sirgado and Tavira (2012), Silva e Silva (2006), Soares (2006), and others, answer the following question: what are the contributions to the construction of the teaching identity, inferred by the use of memory in life and oral history reports referring to everyday school experiences?

Thus, this present study has the main objective, to provoke reflections around the contributions that the life and oral history related to school memories, imprinted in the memories and the exercise of remembering them, can have in the teacher's construction's identity.

To facilitate understanding and encourage future approaches regarding the themes highlighted here, the concept of memory, the relationship between memory and history, and, finally, the contribution of life history in the construction of the teaching identity will be addressed.

In the following sections, we will then discuss how the concepts of history and memory intertwine; after, it will be verified how these concepts branch into the constitution of the teaching identity, and, finally, we will conclude the ideas developed throughout the present study based on the conceptions formulated during the elaboration of this paper.
2 MEMORY AND HISTORY

In a study by Bueno, Chamilian, Sousa and Catini (2006), entitled: Life histories and autobiographies in teacher education and the teaching profession (Brazil, 1985-2003), it is presented the growing use of oral memory as a research tool in Brazilian academic environment. This study mapped the academic scientific environment productions that addressed life stories, autobiographies, memories, reminder, oral testimonies, narratives related to research in teacher training, and the teaching profession.

Each area of knowledge has its own prism when studying memory. The functioning mechanisms of human memory are multiplexed; the study of memory will refer to something multifaceted since the definition of memory is linked to the conception of the area in which it will be studied.

For Le Goff (1994, p.423) "memory, as a property of preserving certain information, takes us first of all to a set of psychic functions, thanks to which man can update past impressions or information, or that he represents as passed ". Through his memory, the individual can store and handle information, facts, and events, but not everything is stored.

There is not only one memory, but several forms of memory that interact with each other to form the memory we use in everyday life. Memories can be differentiated according to how long they do or what they contain.

To distinguish the history of memory, Silva and Silva (2006, p.276) present arguments to facilitate the understanding and distinction between them, as it is possible to observe in this quote: "memory recovers what is submerged, whether of the individual, or the group and history work with what society has brought to the public ".

Life history refers, extrinsically and intrinsically, to a human experience. According to Bourdieu (1996):

To speak of a life story is at least to assume and that is no small thing that life is a story and that [...] a life is inseparably the set of events of an individual existence conceived as a story and the story of that story. [...] Undoubtedly, it is possible to suppose that the autobiographical report is always based, or at least in part, on the concern to give meaning, to make reasonable, to extract a logic that is both retrospective and prospective, consistency and constancy, establishing intelligible relations, such as the effect to the efficient or final cause, between successive states, thus constituted in stages of necessary development. (BOURDIEU, 1996, p. 183 and 184)
As aforementioned, there are challenges regarding memory as a historical document, since memory refers to facts experienced or passed on, and history refers to distant events. Especially Le Goff (1994, p.426) affirms that "the study of social memory is one of the fundamental means of addressing the problems of time and history, concerning which memory is now withdrawn, now overflowing".

Also according to Pollak:

_We can therefore say that memory is a constituent element of the feeling of identity, both individual and collective, insofar as it is also a significant factor in the feeling of continuity and coherence of a person or a group in its reconstruction of _si_ (POLLAK, 1992, p.5)._  

Thus, memory plays a vital role in establishing individual and collective identity, since it reaffirms and engages elements that will contribute to the elaboration, reaffirmation and reflection on identity.

Memory can be collective or individual, and both are exposed to transformations, variations and alterations. For historians, the collective memory is the one that arouses the most significant interest in the study, as it is composed of memories lived or appropriated by the individual; these appropriate memories refer to passed-on facts, which make up the collective memory of a group, a community or a society. This type of memory reveals the social function that memory plays in society.

History is the product of a collective of memories that intersect and that sometimes mismatch. Le Goff (1994, p.477) confirms the close relationship between memory and history by mentioning that "the memory where history grows, which in turn feeds it, seeks to save the past to serve the present and the future".

The collective memory approach began its development with work on oral history. As characteristics, this type of memory sticks to everyday memories rarely refers to historical facts evidenced in historiography, is based only on events considered more relevant and simplifies the time in the present and past.

This oral memory exercise is usually performed by people who do not use writing, such as indigenous, African tribes, and deaf communities. In societies that do use writing, this oral memory starts to be documented through written records. However, the practice is maintained through the histories and narratives woven among the subjects who share cultural experiences. Regarding the recording of oral memory through written memory.
Silva, Sirgado and Tavira (2012, p. 269) stand out that "among the productions, which mark structured memory and texts, the following stand out: travellers' letters, diaries of girls, biographies of heroes (real or imagined), autobiographies and memorials ".

As we proposed in early, when reflecting on memory and life history in this section, we intend to address the relationship between both. Henceforward, we will try to expose, in detail, how the memories are expressed in the oral reports that make up the teaching life histories, with such organization we intend to identify the main contributions of these memories to the construction of teachers identity.

3 LIFE HISTORY AND TEACHER'S IDENTITY

In this essay, we are conceiving oral history as a research methodology, and as other methodologies, whether within the quantitative or qualitative principle, it has its instruments for data collection and analysis. Soares (2006, p.2) draws attention to the recent use of oral history as methodology in research by stating: "it is interesting to note that, in the context of research in the field of Human Sciences, the articulation of education with oral history only recently has it been worked on ".

Oral history is an instrument used for data collection, which allows the researcher to establish certain proximity with his interviewee. However, care must be taken to conduct an interview, as indicated by Bourdieu (1996, apud SOARES, 2006, p. 4) "it is up to the researcher to pay attention and criteria for not falling into the temptation to conduct the interview for a narrative that confirms the hypotheses or research objectives ". It is then necessary that the researcher has an ethical stance towards the research object to generate information closer to the possible reality. According to Gauthier (1987), ethics permeates the entire investigative process. It relates to the simple choice of the topic or sample or even the instruments for collecting information. These options demand from the researcher a commitment to the truth and deep respect for the subjects who trust him. Likewise, the analysis of information and the production of conclusions require ethical care from the researcher.

Much is said about the need to preserve impartiality when the questions are elaborated, as well as gestures, facial or bodily expressions that give the interviewee any sign that induces him to answer the questions that are being imputed by the researcher, and such positions are fundamental to ensure obtaining neutral responses that were not influenced by the researcher. However, such thinking seems to be based primarily on a superficial conception of science and research (GAMBOA, 2012).
Capturing a life history from this perspective leads us to what Arendt (2007) cited as human beings' incessant endeavours in mastering the secrets of life to produce artificially.’

The different research models are based on different gnosiological perspectives. It is up to the researcher to understand the theory of knowledge with which s/he is working when he investigates, as it creates a cognitive relationship between subject and object when it produces knowledge in educational sciences (GAMBOA, 2012). Also, according to the same author:

_The researcher is not axiologically neutral; as a citizen of his time and a certain society, as a political being, as a man of his time and also a subject of his history, he must have a clear awareness of the interests that command his investigative work, so he must spare no effort to clarify the philosophical and ideological aspects of their epistemological options (GAMBOA, 2012, p.23)._ 

The ideas of Bakhtin (2003) are against this perspective, for whom research in Human Sciences is, in opposition to other sciences, whose study is centred on what is dead, for the author what is researched in human sciences is the Other, another who has knowledge about himself, so his contact with the researcher cannot be anything other than dialogic. For Bakhtin (2003, p. 399) "the interpretation of symbolic structures has to be embedded in the infinity of symbolic senses, which is why it cannot become scientific in the sense of a scientific nature in the exact sciences".

We do not want to mention that research must become an activity without criteria, but that it is composed of a logic that articulates several factors to acquire meaning, which in turn takes place in historical-social conditions, making this activity part of a greater process of producing human knowledge.

The richness of the use of life history in teacher education consists in the fact that it allows teachers to bring up their memories, relive moments, to then recognize their teaching identity as a result of their lived experiences related to education or the process of insertion in the teaching career, thus becoming aware of himself. As Larrosa (2000) explains:

_The experience requires: stop to think, stop to look, stop to listen, think more slowly, look more slowly, listen more slowly, stop to feel, feel more slowly, dwell on details, suspend opinion, suspend judgment, suspend the will, suspend the automatism of_
the action, cultivate attention and delicacy, open your eyes and ears, talk about what happens to us, learn slowness, listen to others, cultivate the art of meeting, be quiet, give if time and space (LARROSA, 2000, p. 35).

In the words of Pollon (2009, p. 1224) "when narrating his life history, the teacher can use this self-reflection to (re) plan future actions, in the viewpoint of his professional and personal development." The experiences revealed through the exercise of rescuing and reporting his life story, offer the teacher the opportunity to revisit his praxis. In other words, reviewing their practices, and from that recollection, continue to develop them in the same way or modify them, because:

If experience is what happens to us, and if the subject of the experience is a territory of passage, then the experience is a passion. It is not possible to capture the experience from a logic of action, from a reflection of the subject on himself as an agent subject, from a theory of the conditions of possibility of action, but from a logic of passion, a reflection of the subject about himself as a passionate subject (LARROSA, 2002, p.26).

Such thinking takes root in a vision of experience in the encounter with something experienced, the subject of the experience is, therefore, exposed, open to its own transformation (LARROSA, 2002).

As oral history as a research instrument has already been elucidated, it has recently been in evidence, and it is gaining more and more space in the academic field, the formative character of this instrument has been pointed out by some authors, for example, it is possible to see in Pollon's speech:

[...] the subject when reconstructing his life itinerary realizes a reflection when he remembers his past, and from that, he becomes aware of himself. Therefore, the method's formative character resides in that awareness of his experiences, whether negative or positive, which makes it possible to review certain performance points as a teacher. (POLLON, 2009, p. 1223)

The exercise of bringing up experiences about everyday life, school experiences and pedagogical practices developed, reveals that the memories that revolve around the interaction with other people are loaded with meanings, manifest themselves more strikingly. This is what reinforces Catani and Bueno (2000, apud POLON 2009, p. 1224),
when they say that: "the most significant memories are those that carry meanings acquired in their practical life, most of the time, in the relationships of interaction with the others".

Another point that deserves to be highlighted is that the written record of the report of teaching experiences has the possibility of serving as a reference for practices to be shared by other teachers, regardless of their stage of career investment.

As Polon points out, when saying that:

\[\ldots\] studies centred on life histories make it possible to rescue pedagogical experiences and practices, which when reported/recorded through autobiographies can serve as parameters for other teachers. (POLON, 2009, p.1224)

In the perspective of the statements made in this article, it can be said that the teaching identity is made up of the union of elements that when revisiting the memories emerge, these elements revolve around the pedagogical practice, reflection and (re)planning of future actions that will be developed in classroom and school environment as teachers.

4 AUTHORS CONSIDERATIONS

This assay aimed to provoke reflections about the contributions of life history in the formation and construction of the teacher’s identity.

To arrive at the data collection instrument called oral history, it was necessary first to understand that memory can be defined as storing and revisiting past or interpreted events as such, which is directly connected intrinsically with history.

It was clarified through the contribution of several authors, that oral history is an instrument used to collect data, within the qualitative research approach and that its use as a research methodology for data collection and analysis, has been gaining space in the academic world, specifically in research in the field of education from the perspective of the formation of the teaching identity. We also emphasize that the oral reports about the school routine carried out by teachers have proved to be a valuable source and that the exercise of recalling the situations experienced effectively contributes to the formation of the teaching identity.

During the exercise of remembering and reporting life histories based on school memories, teachers have the possibility to reflect on their experiences and pedagogical practices, to evaluate those they wish to continue to develop or those that need to be rethought, building on this revisiting process their formation and their identity.
In teacher training, the exercise of remembering practices or simply events that revolve around school and teaching routine may provoke critical reflection about the methodologies and strategies developed in the classroom. This reflection will contribute to the process of forming the teacher's identity printed in his actions during his classes.

According to Polon (2009, p. 1230) "that the person is formed through the understanding of his own life trajectory, in this way the remembrance can contribute with the new interpretations in the teaching profession". In this sense, the formative nature that school-related life stories have on teachers has made this instrument gain space in the academic environment, and its use has become increasingly evident in research related to teacher education and identity.

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